

Why the Historicity of the Resurrection is Important

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- ❖ How sure/convinced are you that Jesus really rose physically from the dead?
 - On a scale of 0 (don't believe at all) to 10 (believe absolutely)
 - In our congregation, probably quite a range of scores
- ❖ But is it important whether or not it really happened?
 - Is this belief foundational to our Christian faith? Can you be a Christian without believing this?
- ❖ Many – most? – contemporary theologians say it does not matter and that Jesus probably did not rise from the dead
 - They also reject the virgin birth, walking on water, feeding 5000, etc
 - Marcus Borg (Heart of Christianity, Meeting Jesus again for the first time) is passionate about his faith, but says it is an open question – believe it if you want, don't believe it if you don't want – it doesn't matter.
 - He says it is like a parable (like the Prodigal Son) – its meaning is more important than its factuality/historicity.
 - How does this sit with you?
- ❖ There is a long history of doubting the resurrection, right back to Biblical times (Mt 28:11-15)
- ❖ So let's take the idea that Jesus did not really rise from the dead – where would that lead us?
 - Imagine that Jesus body taken away by others for some reason
 - The women who came to the empty tomb misinterpreted what they saw – thinking Jesus had risen, when just removed?
 - What about the sightings, eg Jn 21? Group hallucinations in midst of grief? Or a fabrication (a lie)?
 - And if so, what confidence in Scripture and in the witness of the disciples and other NT writers?
- ❖ Paul says that the historicity of the resurrection is pivotal (1 Cor 15:17-19)
 - I agree with Paul – the resurrection is a key statement of faith for Christians.
- ❖ Why is important for us to believe that Jesus really rose from the dead? Three reasons:
 1. It was important to the NT writers
 - Repeated references to eye witnesses, first hand accounts (eg Ac 1:3 & 3:15 – others pasted on back wall)
 - Borg says if CNN cameras were there they would not have recorded Jesus
 - I say they would have! Eye witness accounts were the first century equivalent of CNN
 - If it was so important for NT writers, it should be important for us – even if we don't understand it
 2. Let's work backwards
 - If Jesus really did rise from the dead, how can we now say it doesn't matter?
 - Think of own life experience – something important in your history – now people say whether it really happened or whether you just made it up doesn't matter – how would you feel?
 - The suffering of Christ, the wrenching of the Trinity, Christ's death for three days – and it doesn't matter?! How would God 'feel'?
 - What evidence would be required for us to actually believe that something miraculous really happened?
 3. Something objective really happened
 - Hard to explain, because still not fully clear in my own mind
 - In Christ's death something objective happened that changed the world
 - Not just Christ dying and coming back to life – like Lazarus – more than that
 - Our atonement, redemption, salvation is tied into this historical event
 - If Jesus didn't really rise, then our very salvation is in jeopardy
- ❖ So, it IS important for us to believe in the resurrection
 - Jesus wants to engage with us when we question or doubt.
 - Like Thomas, who heard the testimony of the others, but wanted to see/touch for himself – to be *really* sure
 - And Jesus obliged – “touch, believe, don't doubt”
- ❖ One last reason why I personally believe Jesus really rose from the dead – why we CAN believe
 - It's about who God is for you? Is your God big enough, powerful enough to be able to do so? Is your God able to extend his love to such an extent to raise Christ from the dead?
 - Mine is!

Resurrection Readings

^{1Co 15:17-19} And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

^{Ac 1:3} After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

^{Ac 17:31} For God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

^{Ac 2:24-32} But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: “ ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ ” Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

^{Ac 3:14-16} You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

^{Ac 10:39-42} “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

^{Mt 28:11-15} While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

^{Ro 8:11} And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

^{1Co 6:14} By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

^{Col 2:12} having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

^{Ac 4:10} It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

^{Ac 5:30} The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.